

Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge
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Planning Update Number 2 November 1996



Fall migrants are arriving in large numbers at Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge and the fall colors on the trees are at their peak. Cold, clear days in the South Sound signal the coming of winter as we continue to move forward with two major planning efforts at the Refuge.

Administrative Site Planning

Since the last planning update in August 1996, Regional Office and Refuge staff have been working in-house on administrative site planning focusing on facilities damaged by the February floods including replacement of the office (with visitor facilities), parking lot, entry road, associated trails, and maintenance compound.

Taking into consideration comments that have been received to date, a decision was made to locate the administrative office, with views of habitat and access to trails, in the vicinity of the current maintenance building. The approximately 7000 square foot administrative building will have office space for Refuge staff, volunteers, and interns, a conference room, and a library. In addition, visitors will be able to view exhibits in a lobby and buy educational materials in a cooperating association sales outlet. A multipurpose room with up-to-date audio-visual capabilities will be used for special events and for Refuge trainings and meetings.

The parking lot for visitors and staff will have space for 100 cars and 5 buses. It will be located in the vicinity of the existing maintenance building, south of the new administrative office and north of the tree line. A portion of the existing maintenance road will be moved slightly to the west to accommodate

the new parking lot. The existing parking lot will be removed. The entry road for the public will go through the orchard in order to reach the new parking lot and administrative office.

The exact location of an accessible trail near the administrative site has yet to be determined. The Nisqually River Trail will remain closed until further notice. The environmental education program will continue to be housed in the Twin Barns Education Center.

The maintenance compound will have a shop, equipment storage building, a hazardous materials building, fuel station, and portable housing unit. This compound will be fenced and located in the area of the existing office.

For the decisions to date, site planners have reviewed past plans including the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge Conceptual Plan. Efforts to minimize impacts to habitat are a top consideration. The architectural firm of William Wilson from Portland, Oregon has been selected to design the office and maintenance buildings, the entry road, and parking lot. Initial meetings with the architects will take place in December.

Comprehensive Management Planning

The Refuge is progressing on Comprehensive Management Planning (CMP), while concurrently working on the administrative site planning. Staff are drafting wildlife/habitat and public use goals for the Refuge. Further scoping will be done for the CMP to identify issues and concerns. These draft goals will be presented to the public for comment when they are completed and have gone through an internal review.

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Our Regional Office is bringing on a team of three staff members who will facilitate the CMP process. One will concentrate on GIS and the other two will concentrate on planning. Chris McKay has been chosen to lead this team's planning efforts. Chris has 15 years experience working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service including the planning and management of National Wildlife Refuges. This team will be stationed in the Portland area and will also be assisting other Refuges in Oregon and Washington that are involved with CMP. We are looking forward to their additional support and the opportunity to introduce them to you.

We invite you to call, write or stop by the Refuge with any comments about the information presented in this planning update. Specifically, we need your input on the site plan on or before November 20, 1996. We continue to add names to our mailing list, so please let us know if someone you know should be receiving this information.

Thank you for your continued interest and input into these very significant Refuge planning efforts, which will provide guidance for Refuge management over the next 15-20 years.

Response Date

Please respond by November 20th with comments about the administrative site planning. You can call the Refuge at (360) 753-9467, write, fax, or stop by the office Monday through Friday, 7:30-4:00.

You can send E-mail to willard_b_hesselbart@mail.fws.gov.